

# Training EFL/ESL Teachers for a Peaceful Asia-Pacific Region

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In this experimental study which is based on qualitative and quantitative data collection from an experimental and a control group, it has been found that when some educational terms in English Language Teacher Training programs are strengthened in meaning through some adaptations to better convey the message, their effectiveness is increased. Therefore, it is suggested that foreign or second language teachers in the Asia-Pacific region should not teach the target language only for linguistic and communicative purposes but also to introduce characteristics of different cultures and to contribute to educating people who enjoy similarities, respect differences and value human rights.

Key words: English language teacher training, educational terms, foreign language teachers' responsibilities, peace education

## Introduction

Acquiring an education is one of the most significant and basic rights of human beings. Through education, as educators, we prepare people for life, which is full of challenges in many ways such as gaining a profession, having a certain status in society, establishing a family and so on. When planning and designing a curriculum and implementing it, educators have to take these facts into consideration. The curriculum should meet learners' humanistic needs in that it should cover not only academic skills development but also social interaction skills development. Every single person should be aware of his/her responsibilities to the society he/she lives in or

he/she is in touch with (Hones, 1999; Mirici, 2003). The most important of these responsibilities are, undoubtedly, to avoid misunderstandings, and respect others' rights and beliefs (Hufford, 2003; Verdiani, 2005; Mirici, Arslan, & Ozturk, 2006).

Teacher training programs in general aim to introduce educational philosophies, approaches, methods and techniques that equip the teacher candidates with background knowledge for efficient teaching. However, when definitions of these philosophies, approaches and methods in various course materials are examined, it can be realized that whilst they present many technical and complex terms, they lack signs of the simple human purposes of education, concepts such as human rights, children rights, world peace, respect for others, and so on. Clarke-Habibi (2006), for instance, has been interested to know whether people think that teacher training colleges should make completion of a course in Education for Peace for part of their graduation requirements. Akyel (2000) has stated that, "Teaching is grounded in personally evolved theories or sets of beliefs about teaching and learning" (p. 199). Blazquez (2007) has

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reported that “learners develop their sense of the world through social interactions” (p. 27). Similarly, teachers’ beliefs emerge from a complex of social and individual influences, including their own experiences as pupils, personality preferences, public educational theories, and the teachers’ relationships with their students, colleagues, and superiors. Wu (2004) has pointed out,

The objective of schooling is primarily focused on how to make a living rather than how to make a life. To change this attitude and rediscover the aim of education to promote the common good for today’s global society, we must re-examine the impacts of mainstream economic theory and rhetoric and examine its consequences for education (p. 1).

From the same perspective, Hickling-Hudson (2003) has stated that teachers need to recognize and work against “racism and cultural ethnocentrism” both through teaching and curriculum design in order to resolve conflict between different views of the world, proposing intercultural study and co-operation between educational institutions, government and other agencies in the community. Therefore, in the teacher training process it should be remembered that regardless of the teaching subject, the ultimate purpose should be to prepare the learners for life and teacher training programs and materials should support this purpose. If we add more humanistic dimensions to definitions of educational terms, it may help student teachers to perceive more of a humanistic approach to teaching their students.

English language teaching is one example of training teachers contributing to the establishment of a peaceful world (Peace Corps, 2007). In the definitions of educational terms related to English language teaching, it is not common to see traces of expressions such as children’s rights or responsibilities for world peace. In fact, the purpose for teaching English as a foreign or second language is to educate people for a better understanding of others, in other words, to lay foundation stones in the building of a peaceful world, preparing people for a global world. Brown (2000) has suggested that “The human being is a social animal, and the chief mechanism for maintaining the bonds of society is language” (p. 152), adding that “some approaches to language teaching fail to accomplish the goal of communicativity in the learner by overlooking the social nature of language” (p. 152). Few definitions of English

language teaching terms mention these facts or refer to social responsibility. Therefore, adding a humanistic dimensions to ELT definitions might provide student teachers in the related departments with a better understanding of their social responsibilities. For instance, English language teachers tend to use songs when teaching young learners since they believe that children learn best when they are supplied with joyful activities. McConochie and Osman (1993) have assumed that the use of songs in the classroom can be educational as well as fun. Similarly, Scrivener (1994) has pointed out, “songs on tape or perhaps played on guitar in the classroom are often used as a ‘filler’ activity to change the mood or pace of a lesson” (p. 176). However, in such definitions, it should also be mentioned that it is also the children’s right to receive education in a child-friendly atmosphere. If the definitions of “using songs in EFL classes” reflected this fact, teachers would consider the young learners as individuals who have their own rights, and the song used would acquire another meaning which is much more important than something which just fun for children to engage with.

Alptekin (2002) has stressed the importance of a new pedagogic model to accommodate the case of English as a means of international and intercultural communication. Moreover, Mirici, İlter, Er, Saka, and Aksu (2004) have pointed out that in most of the reputable EFL course books there are only a few sections that emphasize peace. Hence, EFL teachers just focus on teaching English as a foreign language without paying attention to other elements, apparently unaware of the fact that this foreign language will be used by learners for the most humanistic purpose of purposes; communication for a peaceful world. C. Alptekin and M. Alptekin (1984) have also sought possibilities to achieve cultural pluralism as a frame of mind, which can contribute greatly to learners understanding the differences between different cultures. Moreover, as Shrum and Glisan (2005) have stressed,

The purpose of language use is to convey meaning in a variety of contexts. The central theme of the text is the contextualization of language instruction. Language that is introduced and taught in meaningful contexts enables the learner to acquire competency in using language for real-world communicative purposes (p.10),

and one such real-world purpose and context is the establishment of a peaceful society.

In conclusion, then, there appears to be a need to place English language education in a context of working for world peace and fostering rights and understanding. One way to approach this need is through the inclusion of these topics in course curricula and materials, as the inclusion of such subjects may change teachers' perceptions.

## Problem

As plurilingualism and multiculturalism have become key aims for many educational organizations, it is significant that EFL/ESL teacher training programs be based on a cross cultural and international approach due to the speed of globalization and the need for peace-respecting people regardless of their home country. Hence, while developing teachers' professional skills, the teacher training process should not only focus on teaching skills for a particular subject, but also should aim at triggering the incentives of the teacher candidates to educate and prepare their students as peaceful world citizens.

Educational terms are an important means of transferring knowledge and experience in the teacher training process. Therefore, the problem of this study is how definitions of educational terms can affect EFL teachers' training quality as experts who educate members of a truly civilized human society in the Asia-Pacific region.

## Aim of the Study

While working as training teachers, we are training the architects for the future of our world. Teacher candidates should feel aware of this fact during their educational period through definitions of educational terms since educational terms can awaken an awareness and interest in training intellectual human beings who value a civilized, peaceful society rather than solely teaching some disciplines for academic purposes. This study, therefore, aims to examine some definitions of basic educational terms in terms of their effectiveness in conveying the ultimate message to EFL teacher candidates, and to discuss how they can be more effective in awakening the awareness of their responsibilities

in the preparation of individuals for life who can contribute to create and maintain a peaceful world.

## Method

The study was designed according to the principles of an experimental study based on qualitative and quantitative data collection from an experimental and a control group. The following procedures were followed in the study:

1. Determining the most commonly used five ELT terms: In this study, through negotiations with colleagues in various ELT departments and through a survey of the related literature, 36 popular ELT terms were identified randomly. A questionnaire with the list of these 36 ELT terms was emailed to a group of education experts, EFL teachers and teacher trainers both in and out of the Asia-Pacific Region. The data from the respondents were analyzed statistically through percentage and frequency analyses, and the most important five EFL terms were determined (see Appendix A).
2. Defining the five ELT terms, which had been selected by respondents as the most common: A wide range of resources by reputable authors was used. A definition for each term was selected from different reputable authors in order to provide a variety of ideas and avoid criticizing definitions from a particular author.
3. Revising and adapting the definitions to increase their effectiveness in raising the awareness of teacher candidates as human educators: The definitions were revised and modified by including expressions intended to awaken awareness and interest in training members of a civilized society rather than solely teaching an academic subject. For this purpose, various elements concerning real life situations and peace education were added to the definitions (see Appendix B).
4. Preparing two questionnaires to assess the teacher candidates' inferences from the original and the adapted definitions: Two different questionnaires were prepared; one with the original, the other with the adapted definitions of the ELT terms. In each questionnaire, the respondents were expected to

choose one of the three alternatives which reflected best their inference from each definition. That is; they were expected to choose whether the definition was about a. teaching English successfully; b. providing learners with better preparation for life; c. entertaining learners.

5. Administering the questionnaires to a representative group of student teachers: For the validity and reliability analyses, the questionnaires were administered to a group of students at an ELT Department who represent the target group of the study.
6. Finalizing the questionnaires with the original and adapted definitions of the selected ELT terms: As a result of the item analyses the questionnaires were finalized.
7. Administering the final questionnaires to two different groups of students, one experimental group and one control group, in two ELT departments: The final versions of the two questionnaires were administered to two different groups of ELT Department students in two different universities. The original version was considered the control group and the adapted one the experimental group.
8. Analyzing the data and finalizing the paper: The effectiveness of the original and adapted versions of the ELT terms were compared statistically and the paper was finalized.

## **Findings**

### ***Findings Based on the Five Most Important ELT Terms***

The questionnaire covering 36 most commonly used ELT terms (see Appendix A) were delivered to 60 teachers and teacher trainers in different countries both in and out of the Asia-Pacific region with the aim of gathering a universal viewpoint. All teachers and teacher trainers were asked to respond the questions according to their own teaching situations. Some of the respondents returned the questionnaire with some additional ideas about how they selected the most important five educational terms. Some striking responses were found, as in the following from Estonia (Teacher A) and Japan (Teacher B):

#### ***Teacher A:***

*"The ranking above is related to teaching English to young learners (aged 9-11) and based on what issues I consider important when conducting my methodology classes. Actually, I would group MI and NLP together (that's why the brackets in NLP box). To be honest, I found it extremely difficult to do the ranking.. I usually group topics into two: the topics I must include in my methodology course on teaching young learners and the topics I can leave aside as they might be more suitable in connection with teaching older students."*

#### ***Teacher B:***

*"Many items on the list are practically useless to me and many teachers of ESL. The first ten are pretty useful. I believe students need a 4 skills approach that requires realistic communicative activities. A language must be treated as a tool for communication and viewed as important, relevant and useful. It should never be taught as a test subject like it is in Japan. Students need to learn to think on their feet, to adapt, paraphrase, explain or whatever is necessary to make oneself understood. Language learning should be fun, too. It is my wish that brain research will eventually make discoveries that will facilitate rapid second language acquisition."*

As can be understood from the responses of two different teachers in quite different parts of the world, the selection of five ELT terms was a difficult process as they are used to considering them as technical education terms. For instance, teacher A could not make an easy decision between young learners and older learners, and similarly, teacher B found many items useless. I believe if they had thought about the terms' influence on learners' personal development and educational process as a member of our society, they would have had great difficulty making a selection among these terms due to different reasons which are humanistic, not technical.

As a result of the teachers' responses, the following five terms were selected by 40 (66.6%) respondents and the other thirty-one terms by 20 (33.3 %). Consequently, the following five terms were determined as the first most important ones:

- a. Approach, Method and Technique

- b. Syllabus
- c. Learner-centered Curriculum
- d. Humanistic Teaching
- e. Using Songs in EFL Classrooms

**Findings Based on the Effectiveness of the Original and Adapted ELT Terms**

The questionnaire comprising the original and adapted definitions of educational terms were administered to 250 students in total. The questionnaires were returned from 247 students in total, 123 students in the control group (original definitions) and from 124 students in the experimental group (adapted definitions). These students had just started the second grade of ELT departments in two different universities, one in Istanbul, the other in Ankara. The questionnaires were administered to second grade students

in the first academic term since they had not started to study the ELT Methodology course, and thus the risk of being influenced by previous knowledge of these terms was avoided.

The results of the assessment based on the effectiveness of the original and adapted definitions of the selected educational terms are shown in Table 1.

As can be seen in the table above, there are noticeable changes in the viewpoint of the teacher candidates concerning the purpose of the educational activities such as approach, method and technique; syllabus; learner-centered curriculum; humanistic teaching; and using songs in EFL classrooms when there are some reminders in the definitions about the ultimate objectives of the education as it is done in the adapted definitions in this study. For instance, the percentage of the respondents in the Control Group who used number 1 for choice "b", "providing learners with

Table 1

*Effectiveness of the Original and Adapted Definitions*

Items*	Control Group (Original Definitions)						Experimental Group (Adapted Definitions)						
	Degree of importance						Degree of importance						
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3	
1	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
	a	75	61.0	40	32.5	8	6.5	46	37.1	74	59.7	4	3.2
	b	43	35.0	59	48.0	21	17.1	55	44.4	48	37.8	21	16.9
2	c	5	4.1	24	19.5	94	76.4	23	18.5	2	1.6	99	79.8
	a	85	70.2	28	23.1	8	6.6	30	24.4	88	71.5	5	4.1
	b	28	23.1	63	52.1	30	24.8	69	56.1	31	25.2	23	18.7
3	c	8	6.6	30	24.8	83	68.3	24	19.5	4	3.3	95	77.2
	a	48	39.3	43	35.2	31	25.4	23	18.5	2	1.6	99	79.9
	b	60	49.2	40	32.8	22	18.0	70	56.5	41	33.0	13	10.5
4	c	14	11.5	39	32.0	69	56.5	31	25.0	81	65.4	12	9.6
	a	22	18.0	45	36.9	55	45.1	21	16.9	53	42.7	50	40.3
	b	72	59.0	34	27.9	16	13.1	75	60.5	24	19.4	25	20.1
5	c	28	23.0	43	35.2	51	41.8	28	22.6	47	37.9	49	39.5
	a	48	39.7	44	36.3	29	24.0	39	31.5	64	51.6	21	16.9
	b	15	12.4	36	29.8	70	57.9	69	55.6	33	26.6	22	17.8
	c	58	47.9	41	33.9	22	18.2	16	12.9	27	21.8	81	65.3

Note. \* The letters in this column represent the following expressions: a: teaching English successfully; b: providing learners with better preparation for life; c: entertaining learners

*better preparation for life*", increased in the Experimental Group from 35 % to 44.4 % for question 1; from 28 % to 56.1 % for question 2; from 49.2 % to 56.5 % for question 3; from 59 % to 60.5 % for question 4; and from 12.4 % to 55.6 % for question 5. This result shows that the modifications in the definitions influenced the teacher candidates' understanding from the related educational terms, in that they realized the ultimate objective of training students much more clearly. The distribution of the respondents' first choices of the questionnaire can be

illustrated as follows:

The differences between the distribution of the choices by the Control Group and the Experimental Group respondents illustrate clearly how definitions influence the understanding of the students in relation to educational terms. Meanwhile, it is wise to remember that students may sometimes fail to grasp the message purely through definitions. Therefore, it is of great importance that academics make particular efforts to discuss the ultimate purpose of an ELT teacher through stressing the key

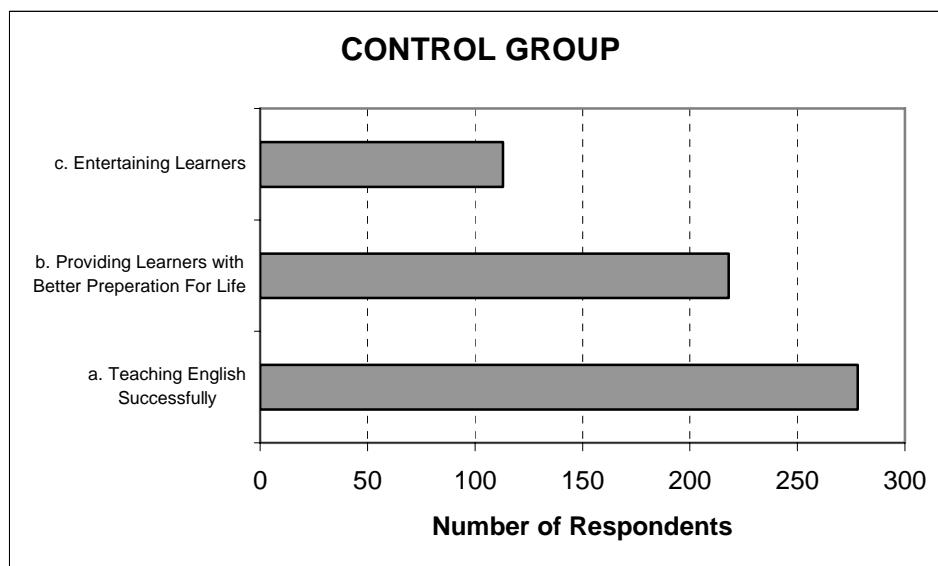


Figure 1. Distribution of the respondents' first choices of the questionnaire in the control group

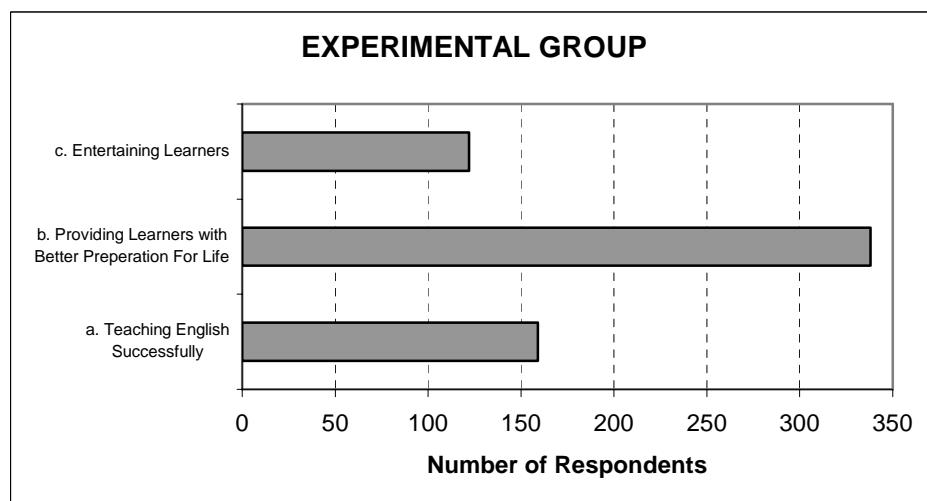


Figure 2. Distribution of the respondents' first choices of the questionnaire in the experimental group

expressions in the definitions of educational terms.

## Conclusion

It would appear entirely reasonable to argue that through a well planned teacher training programme, world citizens who appreciate the value of peace and respect each other can be educated. It should be remembered that most vandals, thieves, even murderers were once students at different levels of education. It is also a striking fact that most of those who start wars are university graduates. Hence, it can also be claimed that teacher training programmes need to undergo reforms in which the philosophy of education is reconsidered through the following question: Is the ultimate objective of education teaching or educating?

English language teacher candidates who study at ELT departments within education faculties gain many professional skills when they are students. They learn how to teach English through resources that introduce educational terms and their definitions. This may enable them to teach English as a foreign language well but does not underline the importance of respecting differences.

English language teachers can educate citizens for a global, multicultural and multilingual Asia-Pacific region. Hence, they play an important role in educating people who appreciate the value of peace, and respect differences and enjoy similarities between Asia-Pacific cultures. Therefore, the education process of English language teacher candidates should cover humanistic elements that allow them to discover their importance in establishing peaceful and respectful characters in their students.

Educational resources are the most important part of such an education policy. The terms introduced in educational resources should have humanistic definitions besides their academic and technical characteristics. Therefore, it is important that these terms be redefined in a way that they remind teacher candidates that, first of all, they are responsible for human education for a world worth living in, and educators need to pay particular attention to and indeed stress key expressions when teaching terms.

## Suggestions

### *Suggestions to Higher Education Administrators*

In the training process, educational terms should allow English language teachers to discover their mission in teaching English. Higher education administrators should organize meetings and seminars on how to improve definitions of educational terms in order to make these terms more effective in reminding teacher candidates of their ultimate mission in teaching English to students in the Asia-Pacific region. The definitions should not only be academic or technical but also, in particular, humanistic. In this way, it will be easier to train teachers who will educate people who respect differences, enjoy similarities and value peace.

### *Suggestions to Researchers*

It is hard to accept the proposition that war alone can serve as the instrument of creating peace, particularly in the context of fighting global terror. One institution that needs to be reinvented in the contemporary world is the school, both traditional and modern. Implicit in this suggestion is a call for a different kind of school that encourages diversity and creativity and not mere conformity (Sineshaw, 2002). Researchers should redefine the most current and common educational terms used in the teacher training departments of education faculties:

Behaviorism, Structuralism, the Cognitive Approach, the Communicative Approach, the Integrated Skills Approach, the Reflexive Approach, the Eclectic Approach, Constructivism, the Grammar Translation Method, the Direct Method, the Audio-lingual Method, the Total Physical Response Method, the Reading Method, the Counseling Learning, Suggestopedia, the Silent Way, Brain-based Learning, Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), Art and Craft activities, Brain Gym, Cooperative Learning, Critical Thinking, Minimal Pairs, Role-play, Self-Correction, Storytelling, Task-based Learning, Visualization, Learner Autonomy.

These are highly important concepts in language teaching. Hence, the redefinition of these educational terms will contribute to achieving the objective of training English language teachers who are aware of their ultimate

responsibilities in the language teaching process in the Asia-Pacific region.

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## Appendix A

### **Questionnaire for EFL Teachers and Teacher Trainers**

Dear English Language Teacher,

The purpose of this questionnaire is to determine the most important five ELT terms for a research on Effectiveness of Definitions for Educational Terms on Teacher Training Quality. Your sincere answers will make this study successful. Thank you for your contribution.

PLEASE, READ THE FOLLOWING EDUCATIONAL TERMS AND REORDER THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR IMPORTANCE

You can write the number of importance in the box next to each educational term. If you want you can also add another educational term which you think is more important than the alternatives given.

Number	Educational Terms	Number	Educational Terms	Number	Educational Terms	Number	Educational Terms
	Behaviorism		Humanistic Teaching		Learner-centered Curriculum		Visualization
	Structuralism		Learner Autonomy		Syllabus		Self-Correction
	Cognitive Approach		Task-based Learning		English for Specific Purposes		Role-play
	Communicative Approach		Approach, Method and Technique		Critical Thinking		Minimal Pairs
	Integrated Skills Approach		Storytelling		Cooperative Learning		Art and Craft activities
	Reflexive Approach		Brain Gym		Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP)		The Silent Way
	Eclectic Approach		The Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI)		Brain-based Learning		Suggestopedia
	Constructivism		The Counseling Learning		The Reading Method		The Total Physical Response Method
	Using Songs in EFL Classrooms		The Audio-lingual Method		The Direct Method		The Grammar Translation Method

## Appendix B

### *Original and Adapted Definitions of the Selected ELT Terms*

The Terms	Original Definitions	Adapted Versions
Approach, Method and Technique	<p>Approach: Theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of language, the nature of language learning, and the applicability of both to pedagogical settings.</p> <p>Method: A generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic objectives.</p> <p>Technique: Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives.</p> <p>(Brown, 2001, p.16)</p>	<p>Approach: Theoretically well-informed positions and beliefs about the nature of the target language as a vehicle for human communication, the nature of language learning for various purposes such as expressing oneself, understanding others and avoiding misunderstanding, and the applicability to pedagogical settings with an ultimate purpose of meeting personal and social needs.</p> <p>Method: A generalized set of classroom specifications for accomplishing linguistic and humanistic objectives.</p> <p>Technique: Any of a wide variety of exercises, activities, or tasks used in the language classroom for realizing lesson objectives and having the learners get pleasure of learning a foreign language and foreign culture in a peaceful, respectful and joyful atmosphere, which contributes them to become a world citizen.</p>
Syllabus	<p>The term syllabus is used to denote that part of curriculum activity concerned with the specification and ordering of course content or input. In other words it is concerned with the “what” of the curriculum.</p> <p>(Nunan, 1988, p.14)</p>	<p>The term syllabus is used to denote that part of curriculum activity concerned with the specification and ordering of course content or input in order to teach a particular subject to learners who will become productive individuals in the society. In other words it is concerned with the “what” of the curriculum in the process of educating members of the society.</p>
Learner-centered Curriculum	<p>Learner-centered curriculum aims at ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- providing learners with efficient learning strategies.</li> <li>- assisting learners identify their own preferred ways of learning.</li> <li>- developing skills needed to negotiate the curriculum.</li> <li>- encouraging learners to set their own objectives.</li> <li>- encouraging learners to adopt realistic goals and time frame.</li> <li>- developing learners' skills in self-evaluation.</li> </ul> <p>(Nunan, 1988, p.3)</p>	<p>Learner-centered curriculum aims at ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to provide learners with efficient learning strategies in or out of a group of people with the same objective, learning English as a foreign or second language.</li> <li>- to assist learners identify their own preferred ways to achieve the objective of learning English for humanistic purposes such as preparing oneself for life, understanding other cultures and avoid misunderstanding etc.</li> <li>- to develop skills needed to negotiate the curriculum in a peaceful and contributing manner.</li> <li>- to encourage learners to set their own objectives in learning English as a vehicle for communication to express oneself and understand others.</li> <li>- to encourage learners to adopt realistic goals and time frame in accordance with the real life situation they are in.</li> <li>- to develop learners' skills in self-evaluation both as a learner and as the user of English for humanistic purposes .</li> </ul>

Humanistic Teaching	<p>Humanistic teaching has found a greater acceptance at the level of procedures and activities, in which students are encouraged to make use of their own lives and feelings in the classroom.</p> <p>(Harmer, 2001, p.90)</p>	<p>Humanistic teaching has found a greater acceptance at the level of procedures and activities, in which students are encouraged to make use of their own lives and feelings in the classroom so that they will be able to develop communicative skills for better mutual understanding.</p>
Using Songs in EFL Classrooms	<p>Songs can provide an excellent means for introducing or reviewing vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions. Another value of songs is in teaching pronunciation. Finally, songs can be a way of introducing various aspects of American culture or of stimulating a conversation on cultural contrasts and similarities.</p> <p>(Celce-Murcia &amp; McIntosh, 1979, p.49)</p>	<p>Songs can provide an excellent means for introducing or reviewing vocabulary, including idiomatic expressions, which are typical to each culture and worth learning. Another value of songs is in teaching pronunciation, which enables the learners to use English fluently and accurately, which is highly important in taking part in a conversation. Most importantly, it is the right of everyone, especially of children, to be provided with education in a humanlike way, and songs provide excellent classroom atmosphere for children to learn a foreign language which enables them to become a world citizen.</p>